



03V-457 ① of ③

James P. Vondale, Director
Automotive Safety Office
Environmental & Safety Engineering

November 5, 2003

Kenneth N. Weinstein
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Subject: Ford Recall No. 03S09 – Certain 2004 Model Year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey Vehicles – Low-Pressure Power Steering Return Line Connection.

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2004 model year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey vehicles to inspect the low-pressure power steering return line connection at the steering gear and, if necessary, correct that connection.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Approximately 23,996 vehicles in the United States and Federalized Territories.
- Affect on Vehicle Operation – If the low-pressure power steering return line connection is not fully seated at the steering gear, a power steering fluid leak may occur. A power steering fluid leak may create the potential for power steering fluid to come into contact with the exhaust system, which could result in smoke or fire.
- Service Procedure – Ford has notified dealers to not demonstrate or deliver the affected vehicles until the service procedure has been performed. Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the power steering return line connection inspected and corrected, if necessary.

Attached is the detailed information required by the applicable portions of 49 CFR Part 573 – Defect and Non-Compliance Information Report.

Sincerely,

James P. Vondale



49 CFR Part 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
03S09 – 2004 MODEL YEAR FORD FREESTAR AND MERCURY MONTEREY VEHICLES
LOW-PRESSURE POWER STEERING RETURN LINE CONNECTION

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Noncompliance Reports, Ford Motor Company (Ford) submits the following information concerning a safety recall action that it is initiating voluntarily.

573.6 (c) (2) – Potentially Affected Vehicles

Certain 2004 model year Ford Freestar and Mercury Monterey vehicles built between March 24, 2003 and October 27, 2003 at the Oakville Assembly Plant.

Because these vehicles are not produced in VIN order, information as to the applicability of this action to specific vehicles can best be obtained by either calling Ford's toll-free line (1-800-392-3673) or by contacting a local Ford dealer who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) database.

573.6 (c) (3) – Estimated Population of Vehicles Potentially Affected

Approximately 23,996 vehicles in the United States and Federalized Territories. An additional 6,654 vehicles are in Canada and export markets.

573.6 (c) (4) – Estimated Percentage of Affected Vehicles with the Condition

Unknown.

573.6 (c) (5) – Description of Defect

Ford cannot confirm that the low-pressure power steering return line connection was fully seated at the steering gear during vehicle assembly. If the return line is not fully seated, a power steering fluid leak may occur. A power steering fluid leak may create the potential for power steering fluid to come into contact with the exhaust system, which could result in smoke or fire.

573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

On October 23, 2003 Oakville Assembly Plant discovered power steering return line fluid leaks during end-of-line vehicle testing. A review of the vehicles found that the low-pressure power steering return line connection to the steering gear was not fully seated on some vehicles. Investigation found that the potential existed for mis-assembly of the line to the steering gear.

As of November 3, 2003, Ford was aware of six reports of partially connected low-pressure power steering return lines. Two of the reports allege an underhood fire occurred. There are no known accidents or injuries attributed to this condition.

573.6 (c) (8) Service Program

Ford has notified dealers to stop demonstrating or delivering the affected vehicles until the service procedure has been performed. Owners will be notified and instructed to take their vehicles to a Ford or Lincoln-Mercury dealer to have the power steering return line connection inspected and corrected, if necessary.

There will be no charge to owners for this service. Mailing of owner notification letters will begin and be completed on November 12, 2003. Ford's general reimbursement plan for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners prior to notification of a compliance or safety recall was provided to the agency on February 28, 2003.

573.6 (c) (9) – Press statement and Dealer/Owner Letters

Ford does not plan to make a public statement concerning the subject matter of this action. A copy of the Notification letters to dealers and owners from Ford will be forwarded when available.

573.6 (c) (11) – Recall Number

Ford has assigned recall number 03S09 to this action.

573.13 (c) (2) – Ending Date for Reimbursement Eligibility

The ending date for reimbursement eligibility for cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners per Ford's general reimbursement plan is November 24, 2003.